



Draft Decision Memo

McDougal Springs Meadow Restoration Project

U.S. Forest Service
Williams Ranger District, Kaibab National Forest
Coconino County, Arizona

Background

The Kaibab National Forest (NF), Williams Ranger District proposes a meadow restoration project northwest of McDougal Springs near the intersection of Forest Service Road (FSR) 110 and FSR 705. Activities proposed to restore the meadow include installing grade control structures (i.e., GCS, or loose rock structures) to improve surface water flow by dissipating energy and stabilizing meadow soils and removal of encroaching trees. This project area would include meadow restoration activities on approximately 23 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands.

Soil erosion and channel incision can occur rapidly through deep, soft soils such as those found in this meadow. Meadow systems on the Kaibab NF do not generally support channelized flow, but instead have dispersed flows across the meadow. Dispersed flows tend to move slowly, with low erosive force and promote infiltration and percolation of runoff into the deep meadow soils.

There is a need to improve the hydrologic function of this degraded meadow to reduce soil loss and prevent drying of the meadow that results from channelized flow. Installation of grade control structures would reduce runoff velocities, allowing water to infiltrate and percolate into the meadow soils, thereby increasing water storage in the meadow. Removal of conifer trees would increase availability of sunlight, nutrients and water for native grasses within the meadow, allowing native grass species to thrive, thereby increasing soil stability and reducing erosion and runoff.

Legal Description:

The legal description for the project location is SW ¼ SW ¼ Section 6 and E ½ of the NW ¼ of Section 7, Township 20 north, Range 3 east, Gila and Salt River meridian.

Proposed Action

Meadow restoration actions would be implemented by work crews with supervision by Kaibab NF. Hand tools and mechanized equipment (UTVs, chainsaws) would be used. Removal of encroaching conifer trees would occur. Removed trees would either be incorporated into the project or bucked and piled outside the meadow. The types of grade control structures that may be used for this project are described below.

One-Rock Dams

This grade control and energy dissipation structure is constructed with a single layer of rock across the channel bed. The structure creates an artificial riffle in the channel. The structure extends up the banks of the channel, at least to the bankfull elevation. They increase channel stability and decrease erosion and scour (in-channel erosion) by reducing water velocity and storing moisture in the inner spaces of rocks, providing suitable sites for vegetation to reestablish, which further increase channel stability and erosion resistance. See Figure 1.

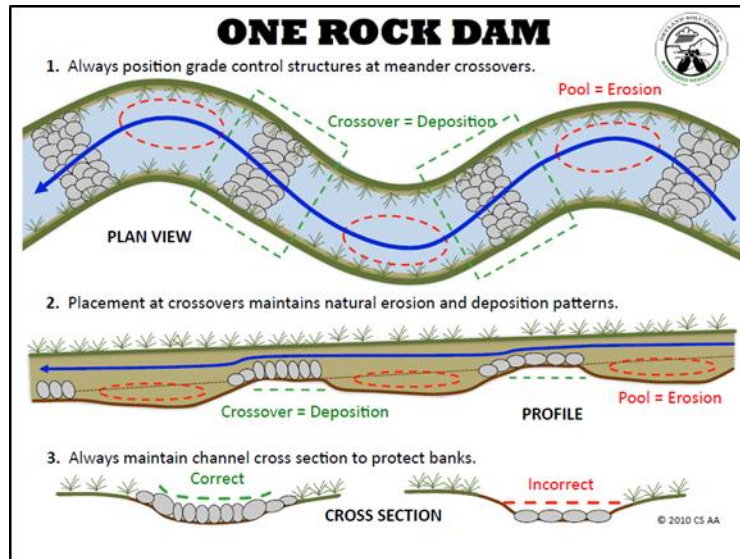


Figure 1. Diagram of One Rock Dam.

Zuni Bowl

Stabilization of existing headcuts would involve the use of angular rock, typically ranging in size from 4 to 18-inches to construct rock bowls to provide protection from erosive water flow where a steep portion of the channel exists. This headcut stabilization method would require hand crews to complete the work. The structure allows for energy dissipation without erosion by creating a step fall and plunge pool. See Figure 2.

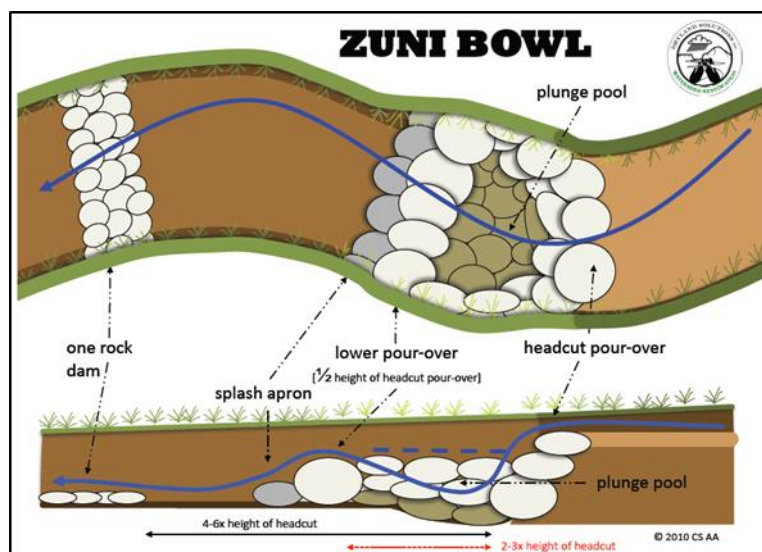


Figure 2. Diagram of a Zuni Bowl.



Best Management Practices

Several best management practices have been included in the proposed action. These include:

- All disturbed areas would be seeded with an approved native seed mix or mulched with a weed free mulch as needed. Revegetation and use of mulch would protect disturbed areas from scour and erosion.
- Best Management Practices as outlined in Appendix B of the “Final Environmental Impact Statement for Integrated Treatment of Noxious or Invasive Weeds” (USDA 2005) would be followed to incorporate weed prevention and control into the project.
- Any heavy equipment would be inspected and cleaned before entering the project area to prevent introduction of invasive weeds.
- Monitor and treat noxious or invasive weed populations following project implementation if infestations expand or if new noxious or invasive weeds are detected in the project area. Motorized use associated with restoration activities would be kept on designated and existing administrative routes except where needed for transport of materials and installation of channel structures.
- Hauling and use of heavy equipment on forest roads would be restricted during wet weather road restrictions

Decision & Rationale

I have decided to approve the McDougal Springs Meadow Restoration Project located on the Williams Ranger District, on the Kaibab NF. This project is categorically excluded using category 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(18).

My decision is based on my review of the documents provided in the project record which are based on the internal and external scoping conducted over the course of the projects planning; because of this, I find no extraordinary circumstances exist that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Reasons for Categorical Exclusion

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if:

- (1)The proposed action is within one of the categories established by the Secretary at 7 CFR part 1b.3; or
- (2)The proposed action is within a category listed in sections 220.6 (d) and (e). (36 CFR 220.6(a))

The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion (CE). It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions and if such a relationship exists, the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determine whether extraordinary circumstances exist (36 CFR 220.6(b)).

In considering extraordinary circumstances, the responsible official should determine whether or not any of the listed resources are present, and if so, the degree of the potential effects on the listed resources. If



the degree of potential effect raises uncertainty over its significance, then an extraordinary circumstance exists, precluding use of a categorical exclusion (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, Part 31.1 and 31.2).

The proposed action is within the category listed per 36 CFR 220.6(e) (18), as indicated below:

“Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees, dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled.” (36 CFR 220.6(e) (18)).

In making this determination, I took into account the following resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

A. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.

There are no federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species for the wildlife resource.

There are no federally listed threatened, endangered, candidate, conservation agreement, proposed plant species or critical habitat occur within the project area. If there is a plant species found during implementation, it would be flagged and avoided.

B. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.

There are no FEMA floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds within the project area.

C. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.

There are no congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas within the project area.

D. Inventoried roadless areas.

There are no inventoried roadless areas within the project area.

E. Research natural areas.

This area is not designated as a research natural area.

F. American Indians and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites.

There are no American Indians and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites within the proposed project area.

G. Archaeological sites or historic properties or areas.

The entire proposed project area was previously surveyed and there are no cultural resources that would be affected. This is documented in Cultural Clearance report number R201903070023.

No extraordinary circumstances were found in the project area.

Public Involvement

Internal scoping was conducted on October 01, 2019. No issues were identified by resource areas.

Findings Required By Other Laws and Regulations

My decision is in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and plans. This project is consistent with the following:

National Forest Management Act (NFMA) – NFMA requires the development of long-range land and resource management plans. The Kaibab National Forest Plan was approved in 2014, as required by this Act. The Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project. This decision is responsive to the guiding direction contained in the Forest Plan. This Decision Memo is consistent with standards and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan.

Wetlands and Floodplains (Executive Orders 11988, 11990) – No municipal watersheds exist within the project area.

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act– The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 states that it is the policy of Congress that the National Forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish purposes, and authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop and administer the renewable surface resources of the National Forests for the multiple use and sustained yield of products and services.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – NEPA requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. This document and the project record provide documentation for this decision, which assures compliance with this Act.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)--The primary legislation governing cultural resource management in the Forest Service is the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 as amended. Section 106 of NHPA requires Federal agencies to take into consideration the effects of their undertakings on properties listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Federal Regulations 36 CFR 800 contains procedures for implementing Section 106.

Administrative Review Opportunities

As a result of Section 431 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 and Section 8006 of the 2014 Farm Bill, the Forest Service will no longer offer notice, comment, post-decisional appeal, and pre-decisional objection opportunities pursuant to 36 CFR 218 for categorically-excluded projects.



These legislative changes and new direction do not limit the public's ability to comment on Forest Service projects and activities. The Forest Service will continue to offer public involvement opportunities for categorically excluded projects as provided for in its NEPA procedures found in 36 CFR 220.

Implementation Date

Implementation of this project is dependent upon funding and could begin as early as May of 2020.

Project Contact

For additional information on this project contact Micah Kiesow, Soil Scientist, Kaibab National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 800 South 6th St, Williams, AZ 86046, (928)635-8354.

DEBRA MOLLET
District Ranger, Williams and Tusayan Ranger Districts

Date

USDA Non-Discrimination Policy Statement

[DR 4300.003 USDA Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy \(June 2, 2015\)](#)

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